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ABSTRACT

This publication, the second in a series of three monographs on solutions to the dropout problem in Canada, adopts the view that the "cracks" in human services systems could be "mortared" at the level of local schools with services and programs that include academic, social, emotional, and vocational elements. The monograph acknowledges that schools and teachers are second in importance only to home and parents in the development of children and youth and recognizes that schools and teachers alone cannot offer the broad range of educational and social services that students need. It identifies the need for coordination of services and collaboration between education and other organizations as a top priority. The monograph also identifies potential partners in education; suggests procedures and strategies to recruit and involve the community in schools; and outlines possible roles and functions for individuals and interest groups in the community, such as school boards, teachers, business/industry, media, and universities. (JDD)

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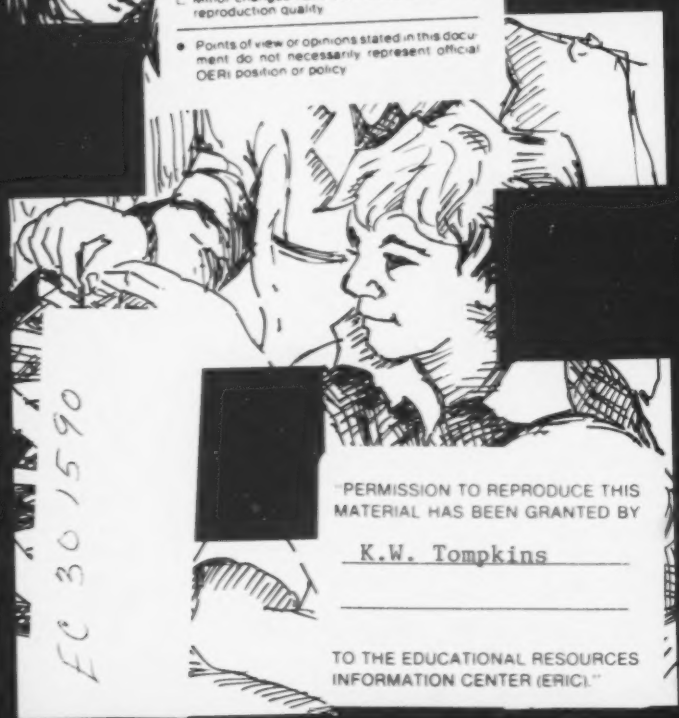

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Stay in School Initiatives

Book 2:

Community/School Partnerships

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Preface

The Canadian Council for Exceptional Children (C.C.E.C.) is a major professional organization in Canada dedicated to improving the quality of education for exceptional children and youth. The mission of the C.C.E.C. is to assist educational leaders to establish new directions in program development and delivery. The C.C.E.C. seeks to develop a future in which:

1. All people are offered equal educational opportunities for growth.
2. Education is the right of every person. Society has the responsibility to extend this opportunity without condition. The C.C.E.C. believes that educating every learner with special needs necessitates an ongoing dialogue between those involved in regular and special education.

With this mission and vision for the future, the C.C.E.C. set out to contribute towards the Stay-In-School Initiative, particularly as there is a high incidence of early school leavers in the population of students with exceptionalities. The C.C.E.C. had two major objectives:

1. To identify the major issues related to maintaining exceptional children in school.
2. To identify future directions and the means to achieve these directions.

To address these objectives the C.C.E.C. organized two National Forums. The first Forum held in Hamilton in October, 1991 included representatives from key decision-makers in education from all the provinces and territories as well as representatives from several national groups. This Forum set the stage and provided the preparatory work for a subgroup of the first Forum to meet in Ottawa in February, 1992. This

subgroup developed an action plan which could be used at the local level in order to address the issues surrounding early school leavers. This action plan is in the form of three monographs.

The C.C.E.C. is pleased to provide these monographs for use by groups and individuals who are concerned about early school leavers. It is only through the development of partnerships and initiatives at the local community level that these issues will be satisfactorily addressed.

The C.C.E.C. wishes to acknowledge the support and involvement of Canada Employment and Immigration in the development of these documents and in the planning process leading to the Forums. This work would not have been possible without that support. Thanks is also extended to participants in both Forums and to the sponsoring organizations for making this work possible.

Don Chapman

Director of Instruction
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1 Background

The needs of students at risk of dropping out represents one of a number of pressure points on schools to provide a wide range of support services. These include social and emotional development and vocational training of children and youth, functions that in the past were viewed as the domain of parents, extended family and other community agencies. Lack of a broad curriculum in schools that responds to social and emotional, as well as intellectual, needs of students is due to:

- assumptions that other agencies are providing these services
- failure on the part of governments to articulate clearly a broad mandate for schools
- lack of both fiscal and human resources to include a wide range of social and vocational services
- perceptions of teaching practice conditioned by tradition, education, and job descriptions that focus mainly on academics and
- vocal segments of the public that promote back-to-the basics schooling

In reality, functions of nurturing children and youth in our society are fragmented by territorial boundaries that social and educational institutions have carved out for themselves. In general, delivery of services for children and youth is characterized by poor communication between agencies and lack of service coordination which, in some cases, finds organizations providing overlapping services and competing for the same clients and in other situations resulting in service gaps and inability of the system to respond to individual needs. The problem of gaps in services and unmet individual needs is aggravated by rigid agency mandates and job descriptions of employees. The temptation of institutions is to serve only those clients whose needs fit neatly into their

mandate or force the needs of clients to conform to their pre-conceived solutions. Students at risk of leaving school before graduation are among the children and youth that slip into the cracks in our human service system.

With support from recommendations in dropout literature, this document adopts the view that these cracks could be mortared at the level of services and programs in local schools that include academic, social, emotional and vocational elements. It acknowledges that schools and teachers are second in importance to only home and parents in the development of children and youth. While recognizing the important role of schools and teachers in the overall development of children and youth, educators at two National Forums on the dropout issue acknowledged that schools and teachers alone cannot offer the broad range of educational and social services that students need. With this in mind, participants at the Forum identified the need for coordination of services and collaboration between education and other organizations as a top priority from a list of important issues to be addressed. In general, it was agreed at the Forum that there was a broad base of support in the community for schools and that a variety of noneducational agencies and business groups are eager to establish partnerships with schools in order to respond to a broad spectrum of individual needs. Dropout literature includes illustrations of small scale cooperative arrangements between schools and specific noneducational groups such as industry and social agencies. What's noteworthy about recommendations from two National Forums on stay-in-school initiatives is the belief that cooperation and collaboration must be broadly-based, involving the total community and an alliance between schools, students, parents, private and public agencies and business and that this involvement must reach into every aspect of the educational establishment from policy-making and planning through service delivery. Furthermore, there is a strong feeling that this initiative should be a grassroots movement, starting at the local level and that district, Provincial/Territorial and National organizations will respond in keeping with local needs.

With this in mind, the purpose of this monograph is to:

- identify potential partners in education;
- suggest procedures and strategies to recruit and involve the community in schools; and
- outline possible roles and functions for individuals and interest groups in the community.

Broadly-based and meaningful involvement of the community in schools has important and far reaching implications for education. It calls for significant changes in areas such as decision-making and governance, where teaching and learning takes place, who teaches, the content of teaching and teaching techniques. Meaningful involvement requires participation from members of the community in all of these areas. Although the goal of cooperation and collaboration between schools and various sectors from the community has been stirred up by the dropout issue, it has important implications for all students not just those at risk of dropping out. School trustees, central office administrators and school principals will be required to work with members of the community in policy-making, planning and management. Teaching and learning may take place in settings other than schools such as the workplace, and instruction may be delegated to members of the business community, social workers, health professionals etc. This is tantamount to reorganization of schools - the second priority identified by members of the National Forum and is included as a topic in the third monograph of this series, *Stay in School Initiatives: Local Planning Process and Model Goals and Objectives.*

2 Potential Partners in Education

Potential stakeholders in schools are listed below, followed by suggested procedures for identifying and involving them and finally potential roles and functions for various interest groups are proposed. The first list, *Canadian Industries by General Categories*, is used by the B.C. Planning and Statistics Division, Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations. The second list, *Breakdown of Service Industries and other Interest Groups* was derived principally from proceedings of the second National Forum. It expands listings under the category; Service Industries. These lists may be useful to local planning groups to develop a preliminary checklist of potential partners in education at the local level. Obviously, lists will differ from one community to another.

Canadian Industries by General Categories

Primary Industries
- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Fishing & trapping
- Mining

Manufacturing
- Food & beverages
- Wood products
- Paper & allied
- Printing, publishing & allied
- Primary metals
- Metal fabrication
- Transportation equipment
- Other manufacturing

Construction
- General contractors
- Special trade contractors

Transportation/Communication & Other Utilities
- Transportation
- Communication
- Electric, gas & water utilities
- Storage

Trade
- Wholesale trade
- Retail trade

Finance, Insurance & Real Estate
- Finance
- Insurance carriers
- Insurance & real estate

Service Industries
- Education & related services
- Health & welfare services
- Religious organizations
- Amusement & recreation services
- Services to business management
- Personal services
- Accommodation & food services
- Miscellaneous services

Public Administration
- Federal administration
- Provincial administration
- Local administration
- Other government offices

These categories were taken from a document entitled *Employment By Industry in British Columbia*, produced by, Planning and Statistics Division, Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations. Schools must keep in mind that the students they educate are heading, not only for post-secondary institutions, but also for jobs in these various areas. These industries are potential partners with schools.

Breakdown of Service Industries and Other Interest Groups

Students
Parents, families
Education
- School boards
- Central office administration
- Principals
- Teachers, teacher aids
- Support staff
- Parent-Teacher associations

Non-Educational Public Agencies
- Health
- Welfare
- Social Services
- Corrections
- Police, law enforcement
- Community recreation programs
- Universities, colleges, technical schools
- Local administration (e.g., Town/Municipal councils)

Advocacy Associations/Interest Groups
- Special interest groups serving constituencies such as people with mental handicaps, learning disabilities, autism, seizure disorders, physical disabilities, giftedness etc.

Service Clubs
- Elks, Lions, Kinsmen etc.

Foundations & other charitable organizations
Chamber of Commerce
Churches & other Religious organizations
Aboriginal groups
Ethnic, cultural groups
Recreation groups & athletic organizations
Youth groups
- Cubs, Scouts, Guides etc.

Senior citizen groups
Women's groups
Conservation groups
Rural organizations
- 4-H Clubs, Women's Institute, professional agriculture workers, home economists etc.

3 Establishing Community/ School Partnerships

An important recommendation in this booklet is to start stay-in-school initiatives as a local or grassroots movement, with a focus on the catchment area around a local school.

- Problems associated with dropping out are most apparent in schools and school staff are likely to have some understanding of the issues. Therefore, schools are urged to take the lead in launching stay-in-school initiatives.

School-Initiated Start-up Activities

- Initial impetus may come from principals, teachers, parents or even students.
- The following first steps are proposed:
  —Form a stay-in-school interest group
  —Request appointment of staff member to co-ordinate preliminary stay-in-school activities
  —Conduct school-based information sharing sessions for school staff, students and parents in order to expand base of support
  —Identify sources of support within school:
    -teachers
    -administrators
    -students
    -support staff
    -parents
- Organize members of stay-in-school interest group to engage the following activities:
  —Identify and recruit community partners
  —Education training task force

- Conduct education/training sessions for school staff to prepare them for change and the need for flexibility in programs.
- As quickly as possible turn over stay-in-school initiative to a community school mechanism.

Community-based Initiative

- Purpose of community/school mechanism is to plan, coordinate and operate educational programs as a community/school partnership that responds to individual needs of students at risk of dropping out.
- Identify leadership and organize a community/school/planning/management committee or task force.
- Adopt a planning/priority setting process that invites input from all interested parties. (see page 13)
- Develop a plan with broad goals and specific objectives. Projects with a clear focus are characteristic of successful drop-out approaches.
- The following categories of activity typically emerge from planning activities and provide a framework for matching needs with interests, skills and abilities of participants.
  - —Administration/Coordination
    - -planning
    - -policy development
  - —Public Awareness
    - -media campaigns
    - -public meetings
    - -workshops/seminars
  - —Education & Training
    - -Teachers
    - -Volunteers (students/parents/seniors etc.)
    - -Non-educational agencies
    - Business and industry partners
  - —Direct Services to Students
    - -Academic programs
    - -Social Services
    - -Vocational Training
    - -Remedial Programs
    - -Extra-curricular activities

-Tutoring
-Mentoring
-Counselling
-Parenting skills
-Transportation

—Evaluation/Monitoring

- Somewhere within these categories, it should be possible to find meaningful involvement for all interested groups and individuals
- Get interest groups and individuals involved in meaningful activities as soon as possible.
- Avoid "band aid" or short-term solutions. Successful interventions require long-term commitments.
- Meaningful participation of non-educational partners will require active involvement at all levels of activity including policy development, planning and implementation.
- Non-educational partners will be required to make long-term commitments and accept responsibility that is commensurate with their involvement.

4 Planning & Priority Setting

A recommendation in the previous section advocated the adoption of a planning/priority setting process that accommodates input from all interested parties and results in establishing broad goals and clear and specific objectives. General guidelines and suggestions for planning are outlined below.

- Basic ingredients of program planning and evaluation techniques include the follwoing steps:

Planning Process

- **Beliefs and values**
- **Purpose**
- **Needs**
- **Goals (Establish priorities)**
- **Objectives (Identify forces that support or inhibit attainment of objectives)**
- **Evaluation**

- Specific planning activities should be undertaken after participants have an understanding of the topic/issues they are addressing.
- Effective plans, once developed, constitute a simplification of complex problems and issues making them understandable.
- The contents of a plan should be true to a groups underlying beliefs and values but translate them into clear, realistic and attainable goals and objectives.

- Establishing priorities is a way to target most important issues and ration limited resources, both human and fiscal.
- Effective planning is a way to engineer needed changes of direction in an organization. In this instance, how to increase our graduation rates.
- In the above framework, goals establish the general directions that an organization wishes to embrace.
- Objectives should be specific, identify *what* needs to be done to accomplish a goal, specify *who* is responsible, and indicate *when* activities shall take place and be completed.
- Evaluation: Two levels of evaluation are needed, one to ensure that goals and objectives are met or modified and a second, qualitative evaluation to determine effectiveness of goals and objectives to accomplish the purpose of the initiative and the quality of educational programs involved.
- Formal plans will be generated by representatives from various stakeholders or interest groups but should provide avenues for input from all concerned individuals. This will ensure a broad base of community support and involvement.
- Plans should indicate how stakeholders are personally effected
- In the process of identifying resources for implementation of a plan (i.e., sources of support for objectives) attention should be devoted to identifying special talents of individuals and/or organizations (e.g., media experts, peer and adult tutors).
- Following development of the first draft of a plan, it should be shared with and seek reaction from the school and community that it will serve and from whom it seeks support.
- Plans must be flexible and the planning process continuous in order to move beyond initial perceptions in order to accommodate evaluation results, serendipity and changing community needs and resources.

5 Roles & Functions for Stakeholders

The following roles and functions are suggested for potential stakeholders.

School boards/Central Office

- establish policies to support locally driven stay-in-school initiatives
- funding
- staff selection programs
- public awareness programs
- service coordination
- evaluation/monitoring
- quality/standards
- programs
- identification/tracking

Principals

- initial promotion-coordination of local stay-in-school initiatives
- set up information sharing sessions
- identify/recruit school-based support
- provide support for teachers
- organize school based teams
- identify stakeholders in community
- participate in development of preliminary plan
- parent support
- work toward establishment of a positive school climate
- participate in development and monitoring of activities

Teachers

- participation in needs assessment and system planning
- in-service education
- academic instruction
- extra-curricular activities
- tutoring
- counselling
- student advocacy
- I.E.P. development
- parent support
- positive school climate

Parents/Families

- participation in needs assessment and planning through parent organization
- lobbying for policy development
- tutoring
- assessment of child
- I.E.P. development
  —child advocacy
  —monitoring
- support for teacher
- counselling

Students

- needs determination
- planning (e.g., input through student council)
- monitoring
- I.E.P. development
- peer tutoring
- positive school climate
- ownership of school programs

Business /Industry

- needs assessment
- planning/administration
- lobby for policy development
- funding
- vocational training
- apprenticeship programs
- work-study

- part-time employment
- transportation
- transition program
- consultation to schools/principals/teachers
- establish needs/resource inventories
- mentoring

Communication/Media

- public awareness programs
- Public hearings/meetings
- planning
- develop print material

Local Government Agencies

- needs assessment and planning
- policy development
- service coordination
- funding
- monitoring
- teaching
- identification/tracking
- interdisciplinary teams
- student advocacy
- I.E.P. development
- recreation/leisure activities
- mentoring
- counselling
- health/dental etc.
- pregnant teens
- other social services as needed

Universities/Colleges

- pre-service education
- in-service education
- consultation
- teacher support
- research and development

Private/Nonprofit Agencies

- needs assessment and planning
- lobby for policy change
- funding
- service coordination
- transportation
- services for special interest groups
- monitoring
- public education
- teacher support
- student advocacy
- tutoring
- mentoring

Provincial Agencies

- policy development
- legislation
- funding
- service coordination
- monitoring
- establish standards to ensure high quality services and accountability
- development of materials
- public awareness

National Agencies

- research & development
- public awareness
- funding

6 Summary

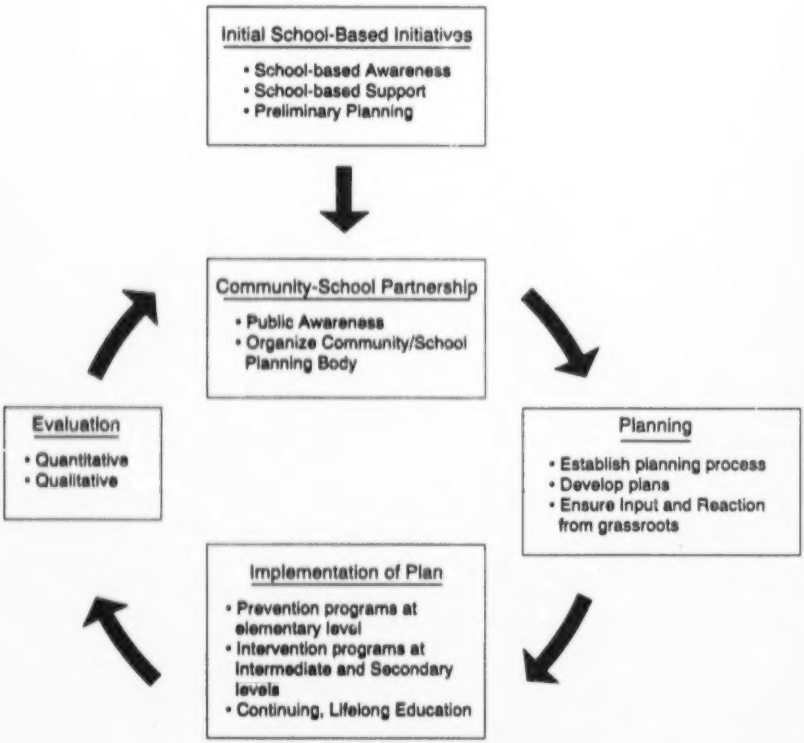
It is generally agreed that inflexible organizations that resist change become ineffective and run the risk of outliving their usefulness. The stay-in-school initiative represents an appeal to, and an opportunity for, the educational establishment to change. The principal motivation for this change is the needs of a specific group of students in schools; students at risk of dropping out. According to research this includes a wide range of students such as children and youth from socially and economically deprived backgrounds and students diagnosed as needing special education services, both those identified and many who have difficulty with academics but have not been diagnosed as needing special education services. While the central target of stay-in-school initiatives are students-at-risk of dropping out, there is widespread agreement that changes suggested will have positive implications for all students.

The recommendation for change that is addressed in this monograph is cooperation and collaboration between education and other noneducational agencies and organizations and restructuring schools in ways that integrates them more completely into the community. Potential partners in education have been identified along with possible roles and functions for them and suggested procedures for cementing community school relationships. The third monograph in this series, *Stay In School Initiatives: Local Planning Process and Model Goals and Objectives.*, moves to another stage of development for stay-in-school initiatives and presents contents of a plan which illustrates the kind of goals and objectives that a local planning mechanism might produce.

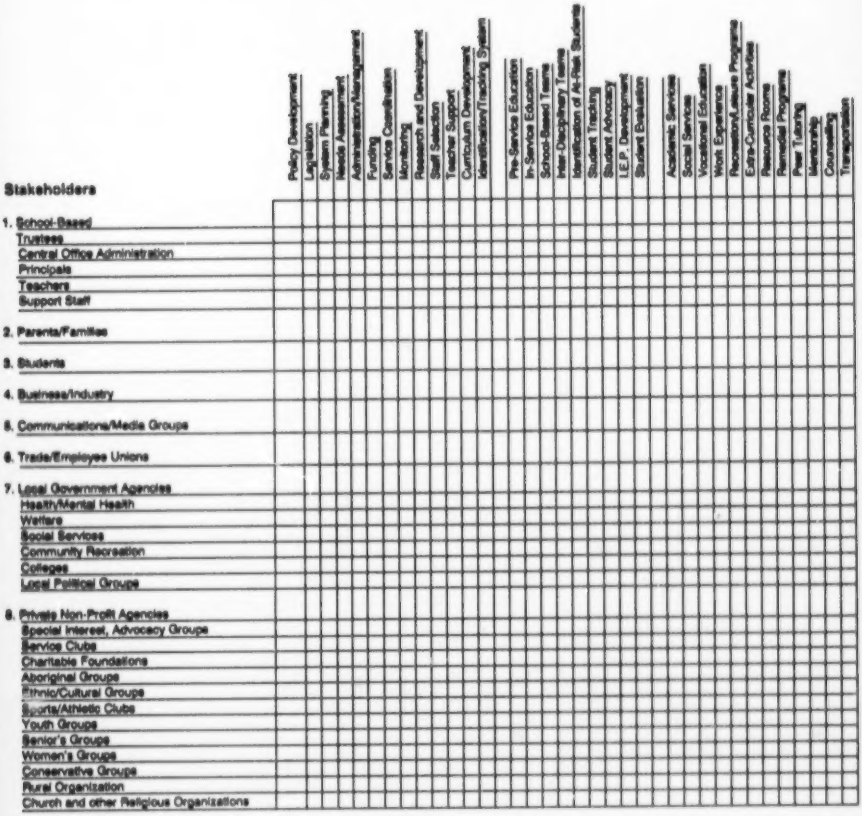
Clearly, the goal to establish meaningful community/school partnerships is a complex endeavor that will take us into uncharted territory. For example, it will be necessary to establish appropriate authority for the activities of local school/community planning

committees and task forces and carve out relationships between them and school boards. Also, it will be necessary to ensure that newcomers into the field of providing direct services to students understand and accept accountability and liability based upon service standards. Hopefully, these issues are not insurmountable roadblocks but rather challenges to meet in order to bring about needed changes. Clearly the obvious benefits of community/school partnerships should provide the incentive that we need to meet the challenges.

Flow Chart of Activities



Planning/Evaluation Grid



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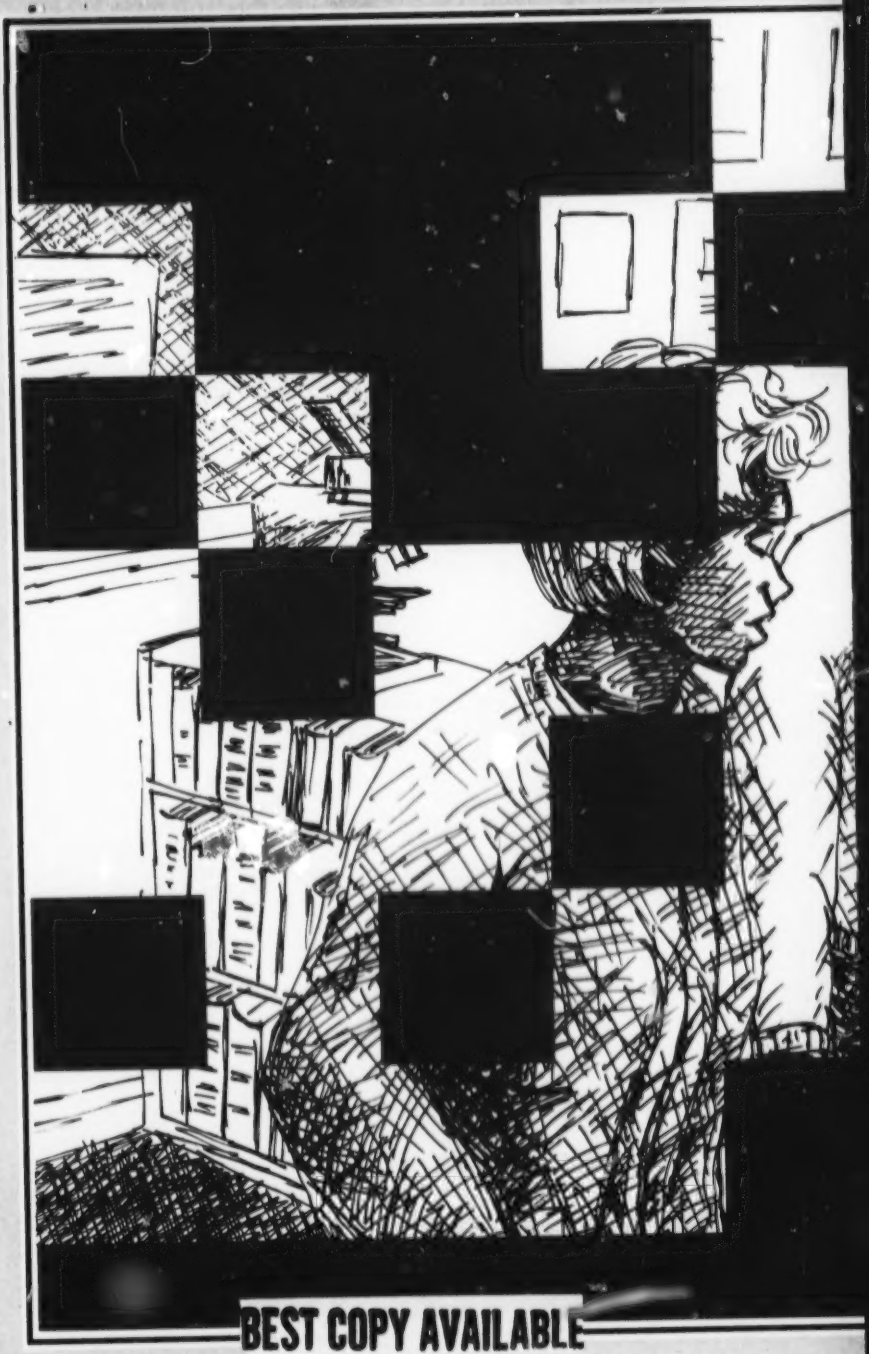

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